THE REGIONAL

There are larger loves and diviner dreams than the fireside ones.

Volume 3 December 1960 Number 3

SHOT AS HUMAN VERMIN

By G. Bernard Shaw

(Ed. Note: The following article was published in Wilshire's Magazine, No. 47, June 1902).

The discovery of the New World began that economic revolution which changed every manufacturing town into a mere booth in the world's fair, and quite altered the immediate objects and views of producers. English adventurers took to the sea in a frame of mind peculiarly favorable to commercial success. They were unaffectedly pious, and had the force of character which is only possible to men who are founded on convictions. At the same time, they regarded piracy as a brave and patriotic pursuit, and the slave trade as a perfectly honest branch of commerce, adventurous enough to be consistent with the honor of a gentleman, and lucrative enough to make it well worth the risk. When they stole the cargo of a foreign ship, or made a heavy profit on a batch of slaves, they regarded their success as a direct proof of divine protection. The owners of accumulated wealth hastened to "venture" their capital with these men. Persons of all the richer degrees, from Queen Elizabeth downward, took shares in the voyages of the merchant adventurers. The returns justified their boldness; and the foundation of the industrial greatness and the industrial shame of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was laid: modern Capitalism thus arising in enterprises for which men are now, by civilized nations, hung or shot as human vermin. And it is curious to see still, in the commercial adventurers of our own time, the same incongruous combination of piety and rectitude with the most unscrupulous and revolting villainy. We all know the merchant princes whose enterprise, whose steady perseverance, whose high personal honor, blameless family relations, large charities, and liberal endowment of public institutions mark them out as very pillars of society; and who are nevertheless grinding their wealth out of the labor of women and children with such murderous rapacity that they have to hand over the poorest of their victims to sweaters whose sole special function is the evasion of the Factory Acts. They have, in fact, no more sense of social solidarity with the wage-workers than Drake had with the Spaniards or negroes.

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THE REGIONAL

Entered as second-class mail at New York,N.Y. March 1957. Published at 14 Washington Pl. New York 3, for and by members of the New York Regional Group of The Shaw Society (London).

The New York Regional Group is the only overseas group of the Society.

Founded: March 1952
Editor : Vera Scriabine
Contributing Editor
Dr. Bernard Dukore

Editorial Board: Joseph R.Dunlap, Moritia Frederick,Dr.Myron Matlaw, Wanda Whitman

Membership in The Shaw Society and the New York Regional Group is $5.00 a year.It includes subscription to The Regional.

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Last September DR. EDWIN BURR PETTET was host to Marcel Marceau on Boston's National Educational Television Program. The discussion of the Art of Mime was made possible by Cambridge Drama Festival.

New York, October 28, 1960. At the Annual General Meeting, the following were re-elected: Treasurer - FIONA IDRISS. Members of the Executive Committee - MORITIA FREDERICK and DR. EDWIN BURR PETTET. GEORGES PETITPAS was elected Recording Secretary.

NEWS ABOUT OUR MEMBERS

DAN H. LAURENCE has been appointed visiting Associate Professor of English at New York University, where he will teach a six-week evening course on Bernard Shaw in the second summer session,from July 31st to September 8th. Mr. Laurence's edition of Shaw's musical criticism,How to Become a Musical Critic,(New York:Hill & Wang; London:Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd.) will be published in February.

ERIC BENTLEY's article "The Making of a Dramatist (1892-1903)" is in the September 1960 issue of The Tulane Drama Review.It also appears as a Foreword to the New American Library's Signet Classic,entitled Plays by George Bernard Shaw.

VIRGINIA CONROY's story,"A Touch of Scandal," which appeared in the Saturday Evening Post, has now been published in Denmark and Norway.

IRA GLACKENS' William Glackens and the Ashcan Group, a Memoir of his Father and the famous "Eight," is being brought out in March by Grosset & Dunlap in their Universal Library paperback series.

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PAST GROUP EVENT

November 19, 1960 - SECOND JOINT MEETING WITH WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY. This year's program was presented in the form of discussion and dialogue with members of both Societies participating. Once again the two friends met in New York, but this year we let Shaw and Morris speak for themselves about life in general and especially the artistic climate of the England of their time. This exchange of ideas was particularly interesting to those who believe that ideals are still of significance to the world today. It was a most successful evening, as evidenced by the warm reception of the audience.

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The following members have taken out conjoint (with The Shaw Society) Life Memberships -RUTH D. WILSON, JOHN GASSNER, FIONA IDRISS.

ABOUT MRS. WARREN'S PROFESSION

It is no news that Mrs. Warren's Profession has been the subject of several controversies. In 1896, the Lord Chamberlain's Reader of Plays refused to license it for public performance. When Arnold Daly gave the play its first public performance in 1905, the New Haven police closed it. When he brought it to New York, the entire cast was arrested on the charge of disorderly conduct. In the United States and in England at the turn of the century, Mrs. Warren's Profession evoked cries of outrage from theatre critics and from professional and non-professional moralists. We of the mid-twentieth century now see quite clearly, as many of our seniors half a century earlier did not see, that Mrs. Warren's Profession is not at all an "immoral" play, but on the contrary, a sternly moral one. Shaw is pointing the finger of guilt not at the individual,but at society. This does not mean that no one is guilty, but that no one is guiltless. A society which offers a choice between a life of prostitution and a life of overwork and exploitation is a society which offers two immoral alternatives. It is that society (and all of its members), rather than the person faced with the choice, which is guilty. In addition, Shaw exposes prostitution as an organized commercial enterprise, run for the profit of capitalists, and very lucrative to the estates which collect rent from these houses. The moral purpose of the play is unmistakable.

The critics of the turn of the century called it a radical play, and indeed it is still a radical play - but not to Marxist critics. It is one of the ironies of Shaw's career that while critics of the capitalist countries have often dismissed his plays as "mere socialist propaganda pieces," Marxist critics have labelled them "bourgeois." Mrs. Warren's Profession is no exception. Alick West, in his critical study of Shaw, A Good Man Fallen Among Fabians, maintains that the play fails because Shaw made Mrs. Warren a capitalist. "By choosing the exceptional individual case of a worker becoming a capitalist, Shaw blurs the antagonism of workers and capitalists and the inevitable class struggles between them. By uniting worker and capitalist in one and the same person, he obliterates the fundamental cleavage in class society." The Marxist critic would probably prefer that Shaw had made Mrs. Warren an oppressed worker in a brothel (a sweat-shop, so to speak), a pure-in-heart heroine exploited by an evil capitalist. The result would have been a convential melodrama with a Marxist moral. Shaw, however, was not interested in a melodramatic approach to the problem. Such an approach oversimplifies the problem as much as the repentant-sinner-redeemed-by-love approach evades it. In view of this, and in view of Shaw's aims, which have been summarized in the preceding paragraph, the label of "bourgeois" given by the extreme Left is as inaccurate as the label of "immoral" given by the extreme Right. Each is a different side of the same coin, for each says, in effect, "The play is no good because it does not follow the acceptable pattern."

Today, when one picks up a copy or goes to see a production of an early Shaw play, one usually expects to encounter a witty but badly dated play. What is constantly amazing,however, is not how much these early plays are dated (and, to be sure, portions of Mrs. Warren's Profession are dated), but how much they are not dated. The recent Ed Murrow program on the commercial exploitation of vice, and Murrow's subsequent year-long "vacation"; the every-so-often arrests of contemporary Mrs. Warrens (usually in a managerial rather than an ownership capacity), and the resulting cases of jitters when one of them threatens to mention "names" --these come to mind immediately on reading Mrs. Warren's Profession. There is a great deal in the early works of Shaw, including this his third play,which has

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Shot as Human Vermin - Continued from Page 1.

With the rise of foreign trade and Capitalism, industry so far outgrew the control,not merely of the individual, but of the village, the guild, the municipality, and even the central Government, that it seemed as if all attempt at regulation must be abandoned. Every law made for the better ordering of business either did not work at all, or worked only as a monopoly enforced by exasperating official meddling, directly injuring the general interest, and reacting disastrously on the particular interest it was intended to protect. The laws, too, had ceased to be even honestly intended, owing to the seizure of political power by the capitalist classes, which had been prodigiously enriched by the operation of economic laws which were not then understood. Matters reached a position in which legislation and regulation were so mischievous and corrupt, that anarchy became the ideal of all progressive thinkers and practical men. The intellectual revolt formally inaugurated by the Reformation was reinforced in the eighteenth century by the great industrial revolution which began with the utilization of steam and the invention of the spinning jenny. Then came chaos. The feudal system became an absurdity when its basis of communism with inequality of condition had changed into private property with free contract and competition rents. The guild system had no machinery for dealing with division of labor, the factory system or international trade: it recognized in competitive individualism only something to be repressed as diabolical. But competitive individualism simply took possession of the guilds, and turned them into refectories for aldermen, and notable additions to the grievances and laughing stocks of posterity.

The desperate effort of the human intellect to unravel this tangle of industrial anarchy brought modern political economy into existence. It took shape in France, where the confusion was thrice confounded; and proved itself a more practical department of philosophy than the metaphysics of the schoolmen, the Utopian socialism of More, or the sociology of Hobbes. It could trace its ancestry to Aristotle; but just then the human intellect was rather tired of Aristotle, whose economics, besides, were those of slave-holding republics. Political economy soon declared for industrial anarchy; for private property; for individual recklessness of everything except individual accumulation of riches; and for the abolition of all the functions of the State except those of putting down violent conduct and invasions of private property. It might have echoed Jack Cade's exclamation, "But then are we in order, when we are most out of order."

Although this was what political economy decreed, it must not be inferred that the greater economists were any more advocates of mere license than Prince Kropotkin, or Mr. Herbert Spencer, or Mr. Benjamin Tucker of Boston, or any other modern Anarchist. They did not admit that the alternative to State regulation was anarchy: they held that Nature had provided an all-powerful automatic regulator in Competition: and that by its operation self-interest would evolve order out of chaos if only it were allowed its own way. They loved to believe that a right and just social order was not an artificial and painfully maintained legal edifice, but a spontaneous outcome of the free play of the forces of Nature. They were reactionaries against feudal domineering and medieval meddling and ecclesiastical intolerance; and they were able to show how all three had ended in disgraceful failure, corruption, and self-stultification. Indignant at the spectacle of the peasant struggling against the denial of those rights of private property which his feudal lord had successfully usurped, they strenuously affirmed the right of private property for all. And while they were dazzled by the prodigious impulse given to production by the industrial revolution under competitive private enterprise, they were at the same time, for want of statistics,so optimistically ignorant of the condition of the masses,that we find David Hume,in 1766, writing to Turgot that " no man is so industrious but he may add some hours more in the

week to his labor; and scarce anyone is so poor but he can retrench something of his expense." No student ever gathers from a study of the individualist economists that the English proletariat was seething in horror and degradation while the riches of the proprietors were increasing by bounds.

The historical ignorance of the economists did not, however, disable them for the abstract work of scientific political economy. All their most cherished institutions and doctrines succumbed one by one to their analysis of the laws of production and exchange. With one law alone - the law of rent - they destroyed the whole series of assumptions upon which private property is based. The priorist notion that among free competitors wealth must go to the industrious, and poverty be the just and natural punishment of the lazy and improvident, proved as illusory as the apparent flatness of the earth. Here was a vast mass of wealth called economic rent, increasing with the population, and consisting of the difference between the product of the national industry as it actually was and as it would have been if every acre of land in the country had been no more fertile or favorably situated than the very worst acre from which a bare living could be extracted: all quite incapable of being assigned to this or that individual or class as the return to his or its separate exertions; all purely social or common wealth, for the private appropriation of which no permanently valid and intellectually honest excuse could be made. Ricardo was quite as explicit and far more thorough on the subject than Mr. Henry George. He pointed out - I quote his own words - that "the whole surplus produce of the soil, after deducting from it only such moderate profits as are sufficient to encourage accumulation, must finally rest with the landlord."

It was only by adopting a preposterous theory of value that Ricardo was able to maintain that the laborer, selling himself for wages to the proprietor, would always command his cost of production, i.e. his daily subsistence. Even that slender consolation vanished later on before the renewed investigation of value made by Jevons, who demonstrated that the value of a commodity is a function of the quantity available, and may fall to zero when the supply outruns the demand so far as to make the final increment of the supply useless. A fact which the unemployed had discovered, without the aid of the differential calculus, before Jevons was born. Private property, in fact, left no room for new comers. Malthus pointed this out, and urged that there should be no newcomers - that the population should remain stationary. But the population took exactly as much notice of this modest demand for stagnation as the incoming tide took of King Canute's ankles. Indeed the demand was the less reasonable since the power of production per head was increasing faster than the population (as it still is), the increase of poverty being produced simply by the increase and private appropriation of rent. After Ricardo had completed the individualist synthesis of production and exchange, a dialectical war broke out. Proudhon had only to skim through a Ricardian treatise to understand just enough of it to be able to show that political economy was a reductio ad absurdam of private property instead of a justification of it. Ferdinand Lassalle, with Ricardo in one hand and Hegel in the other, turned all the heavy guns of the philosophers and economists on private property with such effect that no one dared to challenge his characteristic boasts of the irresistible equipment of Social Democracy in point of culture. Karl Marx, without even giving up the Ricardian value theory, seized on the blue books which contained the true history of the leaps and bounds of England's prosperity, and convicted private property of wholesale spoliation, murder, and compulsory prostitution; of plague, pestilence, and famine; battle, murder, and sudden death. This was hardly what had been expected from an institution so highly spoken of. Many critics said that the attack was not fair: no one ventured to pretend that the charges were not true. The facts were not only admitted; they had been legislated upon. Social Democracy was working itself out practically as well as academically. But if we have got as far as an intellectual conviction that

the source of our social misery is no eternal well-spring of confusion and evil, but only an artificial system susceptible of almost infinite modification and readjustment - nay, of practical demolition and substitution at the will of man, then a terrible weight will be lifted from the minds of all except those who are,whether avowedly to themselves or not, clinging to the present state of things from base motives. We have had in this century a stern series of lessons on the folly of believing anything for no better reason than that it is pleasant to believe it. It was pleasant to look round with a consciousness of possessing a thousand a year, and say, with Browning's David, "All's love; and all's law." It was pleasant to believe that the chance we were too lazy to take in this world would come back to us in another. It was pleasant to believe that a benevolent hand was guiding the steps of society; overruling all evil appearances for good; and making poverty here the earnest of a great blessedness and reward hereafter. It was pleasant to lose the sense of worldly inequality in the contemplation of our equality before God. But utilitarian questioning and scientific answering turned all this tranquil optimism into the blackest pessimism. Nature was shown to us as "red in tooth and claw:" if the guiding hand were indeed benevolent, then it could not be omnipotent, so that our trust in it was broken; if it were omnipotent, it could not be benevolent; so that our love of it turned to fear and hatred. We had never admitted that the other world, which was to compensate for the sorrows of this, was open to horses and apes (though we had not on that account been any the more merciful to our horses); and now came Science to show us the corner of the pointed ear of the horse on our own heads, and present the ape to us as our blood relation. No proof came of the existence of that other world and that benevolent power to which we had left the remedy of the atrocious wrongs of the poor: proof after proof came that what we called Nature knew and cared no more about our pains and pleasures than we know or care about the tiny creatures we crush under foot as we walk through the fields. Instead of at once perceiving that this meant no more than that Nature was unmoral and indifferent, we relapsed into a gross form of devil worship, and conceived Nature as a remorselessly malignant power. This was no better than the old optimism, and infinitely gloomier. It kept our eyes still shut to the truth that there is no cruelty and selfishness outside man himself; and that his own active benevolence can combat and vanquish both. When the Socialist came forward as a meliorist on these lines, the old school of political economists who could see no alternative to private property, put forward in proof of the powerlessness of benevolent action to arrest the deadly automatic production of poverty by the increase of population, the very analysis I have just presented. Their conclusions exactly fitted in with the new ideas. It was Nature at it again - the struggle for existence - the remorseless extirpation of the weak - the survival of the fittest - in short, natural selection at work. Socialism seemed too good to be true: it was passed by as merely the old optimism foolishly running its head against the stone wall of modern science. But Socialism now challenges individualism, skepticism, pessimism, worship of Nature personified as a devil, on their own ground of science. The science of the production and distribution of wealth is Political Economy. Socialism appeals to that science, and, turning on Individualism its own guns, routs it in incurable disaster . Henceforth the bitter cynic who still finds the world an eternal and unimprovable doghole,with the placid person of means who repeats the familiar misquotation, "the poor ye shall have always with you," lose their usurped place among the cultured,and pass over to the ranks of the ignorant, the shallow, and the superstitious. As for the rest of us, since we are taught to revere proprietary respectability in our unfortunate childhood, and since we found our childish hearts so hard and unregenerate that they secretly hated and rebelled against respectability in spite of that teaching, it is impossible to express the relief with which we discover that our hearts were all along right, and that the current respectability of to-day is nothing but a huge inversion of righteous and scientific social order weltering in dishonesty,uselessness, selfishness,wanton misery,and idiotic waste of magnifi-

cent opportunities for noble and happy living. It was terrible to feel this, and yet to fear that it could not be helped - that the poor must starve and make you ashamed of your dinner - that they must shiver and make you ashamed of your warm overcoat. It is to economic science - once the Dismal, now the Hopeful - that we are indebted for the discovery that though the evil is enormously worse than we knew, yet it is not eternal - not even very long lived, if we only bestir ourselves to make an end of it.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I wish to write in protest against the lead article in the August issue* of The Regional claiming that Chesterton and Shaw were one and the same. I have spent the past several years in research to show that Shaw was Shakespeare or Shakespeare will be Shaw, as you please, and I am sure that I can now prove my case beyond the slightest shadow of doubt. My proof rests on many bases previously used by Shakespeare authorship authorities, and includes facets of the question neglected by previous scholars:

1. Chronology. It may be argued that the time factor could upset my theory. However, a close examination obviates this difficulty. Both the Marlowians and Oxfordians have made np difficulty of the fact that Marlowe was killed in 1593, before Shakespeare's greatest plays were written, and that the Earl of Oxford died in 1604 before King Lear, Macbeth and other plays, major and minor, were composed. Shakespeare was writing plays until at least 1613. Now, it is quite clear that, if Shakespeare could write after he was dead, he could most certainly have written before he was born as Shaw. Indeed, the latter is far more likely, as a dead man would scarcely have the energy to produce plays of the magnitude of Antony and Cleopatra, while a man as yet unborn would have his élan vital completely unimpaired.

2. From Internal Evidence. It will be noticed that in several cases, Shakespeare and Shaw have chosen similar subject matter - the two Cleopatra plays are a clear case in point. Moreover, in Dark Lady of the Sonnets, Shaw not only clearly indicates the identity of that elusive Miss, but also expresses Shakespeare's sentiments on a national theatre. If Shaw were not Shakespeare, how could he know the Bard's opinion? Also, in the same play, Shaw gives evidence of Shakespeare's methods of composition, a thing he could certainly not have done without inside information.

In Shakes vs. Shav Shaw claims to be a greater playwright than Shakespeare, a boast only the Bard, himself, could make. And who but Shakespeare would have had the temerity to rewrite one of the Swan of Avon's works as Shaw did in correcting the last act of Cymbeline? The Acrostic. I refer the impartial to lines 7, 8 and 9 of Sonnet LIII, which read:

> On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,
> And you in Grecian tires are painted new:
> Speak of the spring and foison of the year ...

You will notice the capital G and the capital S in the last two lines, while the first letter of the word "beauty," in the first line is B and falls in position between the G and the S, showing Shakespeare's assumption of the famous initials.

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* The Chestershaw, by Barbara Smoker, The Regional, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 1 & 3.

In Sonnet XLIX, Shakespeare states:

Against that time do I ensconce me here
Within the knowledge of mine own desert

a plain acknowledgment that he was merely biding his time in the 16th century.

The Name: Here is the proof that no other claimant to Shakespeare's fame can offer. Note how both Shakespeare's and Shaw's name begin with the same letters. No such claim can be made for Chesterton vs. Shaw unless the author of The Chestershaw wishes to imply that her candidate's name was really Shasterton. I am perfectly willing to look into the claims of Shelley along these lines, although his very name gives Shaw the advantage in the matter. However, when one remembers that Shelley's dramas are written in a style closer to that of the Bard than Shaw's, while Shelley's radical viewpoint is closer to that of Shaw than to the conservative Swan, it is possible that Shelley was a necessary transition state between Shakespeare and Shaw, the initial Sh being in itself transitional. So it may be that Shaw could have been Shelley as well as Shakespeare. In this connection, it is interesting that the initials of Shelley's name are also transitional: P. B. S., with the "P" rhyming with "G".

From the above, it is seen that, while Shaw may have been Shelley, he most certainly was Shakespeare. Quod erat demonstrandum.

MORITIA FREDERICK

(Ed. Note: Moritia Frederick, a member of the New York Regional Group's Executive Committee, is Supervising Librarian at the West Farms Branch of The New York Public Library.)

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About Mrs. Warren's Profession - Continued from Page 3.

meaning and vitality in 1960. I think Shaw would agree that it is unfortunate for society that these plays have not become museum pieces.

BERNARD DUKORE

(Ed. Note: Bernard Dukore, Contributing Editor of The Regional, is Assistant Professor, Department of Drama, at the University of Southern California.

The New York Regional Group's Travelling Readers' Theatre, which aims to promote a wider interest in the works of Bernard Shaw, presented Mrs. Warren's Profession on September 24th, at the American Association of University Women. It was repeated on October 6th at Bellevue's Psychiatric Division. Both performances were played before large and appreciative audiences. Robert Schlitt directed and was seen in the part of Praed. Others in the cast were: Gretchen Jacobs as Mrs. Warren; Judith Tillman as Vivie; Clinton Roberts as Sir George Crofts; Derek Murcott as Frank, and Jack Kalmar as the Rev. Samuel Gardner. The performances were prefaced by Jack Kalmar's brief narrations, and Arlette Schlitt introduced the actors.)

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SEND YOUR DUES FOR MEMBERSHIP TO FIONA IDRISS, TREASURER OF THE NEW YORK REGIONAL GROUP OF THE SHAW SOCIETY (LONDON), at 315 East 72nd Street, New York 21, N. Y.

SHAW IN THE CLASSROOM

When Blanche Patch became Shaw's secretary, she told Shaw that many people were surprised that she had been chosen, for she had no university degree. He replied, "You would have been altogether useless to me if you had been a university woman." A character in his last long play, Buoyant Billions, a character who is obviously the spokesman for the dramatist, declares that university graduates as a class are politically and scientifically obsolete, and degrees are usually the phases of pretenses. Shaw was the only Fabian leader who saw in formal education little hope for man's progress. He sniped at Oxford and Cambridge all his life, and firmly refused to accept any honorary degrees.

Why was he so contemptuous of the universities? How much of his violent animadversion and carping is merely Shavian exaggeration - - like his shocker that he hates the poor and would like to see them exterminated? How much of it derives from the inability of his poor and snobbish family to send him to the university in Dublin and their putting him into a business office instead? The ridiculous snobbery of the faintly aristocratic Shaws made impossible his "working his way" through college, as Ralph Waldo Emerson and thousands of others have done. How much of it derived from his honest observation that he was "more highly educated than most university scholars"?

Bernard Shaw was, of course, one of those rare people who need no university education. He educated himself through a combination of intellectual vigor, enormous curiosity about hundreds of things, an almost perfect memory, and the skill to synthesize his learning and transmit facts into wisdom. He saw the relationship of economics with ethics, the biological with the social sciences, political economy with history. There was no such thing as an unrelated or isolated fact in his mind.

Much of his bias against the school and university strikes us as illogical, if not downright silly; but often, as we come to expect in Shaw, his strictures make sense. "A liberal education cannot be acquired without interest and pleasure ... It cannot be forced." He many times refers to the damage done to the literary and dramatic sense of young people by the compulsory study of Shakespeare. We can easily agree with him when he asserts that his own schooling was worthless. He never ceased to complain about the imprisonment (in the school room) that kept him from books, the picture gallery, music, and the outdoors. His jaundiced view of schooling included the great British public schools, for it was his observation that their graduates emerged as accomplished sportsmen (and the "equestrian classes" of Heartbreak House), but ignorant and sheeplike intellectually.

This distrust of and contempt for schools account for his vehement objection to taking Shaw into the classroom. He believed firmly (and mistakenly) that collegians, as he called university students, would despise him as they have come to despise Shakespeare if they were forced to read his plays. Shaw, who is right in most of his judgments, is spectacularly wrong here. The three great Stratford festivals are made possible partly by the interest and sometimes enthusiasm of those who have read Shakespeare in the schools. In the absence of an American national theatre our colleges have done much to keep Shakespeare's plays alive in the theatre. Young people read Shaw in our classrooms with a delight that would astonish Shaw - it has been well said that many people learn first through Shaw that thinking can be fun.

I received the first of Shaw's famous postcards many years ago when I edited my first collection of modern plays and appealed to him personally for his consent to allow me to include one of his comedies. His answer was the same as that given to dozens of other anthologists: "No! No! No! I do not want collegians to despise me as they despise Shakespeare!" A few years later, when I edited a new collection, one of his plays had just appeared in another anthology, and I hoped that his hostility had subsided. I again wrote to him and this time reminded him that one of his plays had been reprinted in a textbook, but in his reply he ignored by reminder, and directed his curse toward anyone who would force school-

boys to read his plays. The inexpensive Penguin and other editions made Shaw's refusal of little consequence as far as general drama courses were concerned.

About twenty years ago I began an experiment: I would eventually devote a whole semester to Shaw's plays and prefaces. Semester by semester in one course I dropped from consideration other dramatists or diverted them to another course in modern drama, and added more and more Shaw. I renamed the course "The Plays of Ibsen and Shaw." Even today a few of Ibsen's plays are required reading to prepare students for the Shavian theatre; actually for most of the drama and theatre students it is rereading, for they already know their Ibsen. When I notified Shaw that one advanced course in drama at Purdue University was now devoted to his plays, he fired back an explosive post card demanding that the course be abandoned at once, and again laid his curse on schoolmasters who will make him despised as Shakespeare is despised. It seemed to me quite possible that Shaw saw tortured students in American university classrooms in the prejudiced light in which he viewed British schoolboys mechanically writing latin verses and droning over Shakespeare's prosody or Elizabethan grammar.

Shaw's American publisher, Dodd Mead, were so unconvincible that they refused to provide free desk copies, and for years I paid for my "textbooks" - I am not sure that I still do not do so. I was told by many publishers' representatives that mine was the first course in an American university devoted to Shaw. Although not a "popular" course in that it attracts throngs of students, for it obviously can have no reputation as a snap course, it is thoroughly enjoyed by those who elect it. Many of them for the first time feel a real intellectual excitement and become aware of the power and beauty of great and lucid English prose. Dates of composition mean little to them: Man and Superman, Major Barbara, and Misalliance, although over half a century old, are tremendously stimulating to these young people who have been reared partly on the vapidity of television "programs" and the dullness of popular magazines where there is more meeting of platitudes than of minds.

Except for the Ibsen there is no outside reading: I ask the students to devote all extra reading time to Shaw, and not to books about him. I send them to his novels, letters, essays, and unassigned plays, and I urge as much reading in the prefaces as possible. About twenty-one plays are assigned (favorites among my students are Saint Joan, Man and Superman, Misalliance, and Heartbreak House), together with the entire Prefaces to Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant, Plays for Puritans, The Doctor's Dilemma, Misalliance, Heartbreak House, and Too True to Be Good. Subject matter for term papers can be found largely in Shaw's own books, where there is a wealth of material concerning art, music, religion, socialism, democracy, war, history, comedy, satire, marriage, etc. Although I require no outside reading, I often refer to the excellent studies by Irvine, Henderson, Chesterton, Ervine, Pearson, and others, as well as to Dramatic Opinions and Essays, Letters to Ellen Terry and Mrs. Patrick Campbell, Sixteen Self-Sketches, Literary Essays, Pen Portraits, and other works of Shaw. I note that many students voluntarily secure these books at the library and read them. All tests are open-book, with questions directed toward interpretation and comment, not toward facts and memorization.

Reading and discussing Shaw for sixteen weeks give many students their first genuine understanding of the meaning of the term "liberal education."

RICHARD A. CORDELL

(Ed. Note: A member of the New York Regional Group, Professor Cordell gave at Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana, the first college course devoted to Shaw's plays — and the course is still flourishing!)